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PRS MILLIAM PEACE UNIVERSITY LITERARY MAGAZINE

2015



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DISEASE

SANDY NGUYEN

TIME UNRAVELS WHEN I CAN'T FIND YOU. THERE'S NO MORE HOPE. WHEN LIES BURDEN ME MORE THAN EVER. N A TIME WHERE I LOVED YOU. WHERE | HELD YOU WHEN YOU HURT WHEN TEARS SEEM TOO INEVITABLE TO SHED. YOU HID FROM EXISTENCE. AND RAN AWAY FROM NIGHTMARES. T ISN'T FAIR NOW-BEING ALONE IN THE DARK. SORRY THAT I WASN'T THERE. TO GUIDE YOU WHEN YOU COULDN'T SEE. TO THINK-EVERYTHING THAT YOU COULD BE. S GONE WITH JUST A WINK. HOW COULD | SAVE YOU? ALREADY LOST WITHIN YOUR MIND. STILL TOGETHER. BUT FOREVER APART.

LOOSE SUNG UNREACHABLE

NATHANIEL HISCOE

IN DREAMS I AM TO PICK UP A GUITAR ACCIDENTALLY | REACH FOR AN UNKNOWN CELLO. GRABBING THE NECK HOLDING HER BACK HER STRINGS BREAK FREE NEEDLING INTO MY PRESSURE POINTS AND MAIN VEINS LIKE METAL LEECHES TO SPITE VITAL FLUIDS QUICK AS THEY WERE DRAINED BLOOD RUSTS RUDDY GROUND AND IT'S TIME TO TAKE UP THE PLANO NOT HAVING THE PRESENCE OF THROAT FINGER MY KEYBOARD TEETH SUCH A LOVELY MONOTONE FOR SUCH A LONELY DRONE UPON HEARING HALITOSIS THEY CRACK AWAY SWALLOW MY SO TENUTO FOOT FOR MY SONG REGURGITATES THE LAST IRON STRING WORMS INTO HER EAR ON A FISH HOOK DROWNING THE DRUM IN SONIC RIVER STYX EURYDICE TURNED HER BACK ON ORPHEUS ONCE AND NOW FOR ALL TIME WE'LL ONLY SEE HER FROM BEHIND WHAT MUSIC THEY MADE IS BETTER TO HAVE NEVER HEARD AT ALL NOW ONLY ERIS WILL LISTEN

BECOMING

CHRISTINA HAWES

I AM OF MANY THINGS ONLY A FIFTH OF A CENTURY BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE ME ANY LESS CAPABLE ANYTHING LESS THAN AMAZING ANYTHING SHY THAN THE MAKINGS OF GREAT SURE THERE'RE SOME GLITCHES | COULD WRITE ABOUT BUT WHY? AM A SURVIVOR AM BEAUTIFUL

AM A PART OF THE MANY RAYS OF LIGHT WAITING TO SHINE THROUGH THE

CLOUDED DARKNESS

A PART OF THE FUTURE

LEADER OF A NEW DAY

AM FLAWED

BUT I AM AWARE

AND THAT MAKES ME STUNNING

THIS ALSO MEANS | AM BECOMING

CREATED BY GOD

WITH TALENTS GEARING UP

TO SHARE WITH THE WORLD

AM OF MANY THINGS

ONLY A FIFTH OF A CENTURY

BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE ME ANY LESS CAPABLE

ANYTHING LESS THAN AMAZING

BARBARA ALLEN CATES

PACKAGED

AGAINST BLUE SKY

BROWN BARN BOARDS STAND GUARD

SENTRY OF PASSAGE

SILENT KNOTS PUNCTUATE

WHAT IS NO LONGER

NO SOUNDS SPILL

FROM EMPTY PORCH SWING

WEEDS COAGULATE

IN SANDY PATHWAYS LEADING TO DISTANT

NOWHERE

ON THE HIGHWAY
A TRUCK GRINDS TOWARD DESTINATION

AWAY

FROM

HOUSE,

ABANDONED.





EVANGLINE LUBAK

SPARK

HER HEART IGNITES

FIRE AND FUSE BURN

SHE LEAPS INTO THE SKY.

SHRIEKING WITH DELIGHT

SLICING THROUGH THE GLOOM

LIKE A SHOOTING STAR

SHE CLIMBS HIGHER, HIGHER STILL TOWARDS ELYSIUM.

TO THE STARS.

INVITING HER CLOSER.

WHISPERING PROMISES OF CEASELESS

WONDER

SO CLOSE, SO CLOSE

SHE SCREAMS WITH PURE EUPHORIA

HER VOICE ECHOES LIKE A THOUSAND CAN-

NON5

PASSION FLARES IN BRILLIANT COLORS IT IS THE JOY THAT KILLS

LIKE A SUPERNOVA OF A DYING SUN.

SHE BURNS TOO BRIGHTLY, TOO QUICKLY

HER HEART BURSTS

A BITTERSWEET EXPLOSION

LIKE A GUNSHOT.

LIKE THE SNUFF OF A CANDLE

SHE DIES

FALLING TO THE EARTH

GRAY, LIFELESS ASH

OTHERS PASS HER

RACING TO HEAVEN ON AN IMPOSSIBLE QUEST

E ONLY THEY KNEW...

SHE CRIES TO THEM

BUT HER VOICE IS LOST

THEY FLY

THEY BURN

THEY DIE

A LUMINOUS RAINBOW OF SPARKS AND STARDUST

CONCEALS THE MASS GENOCIDE

THEIR BODIES

HIDDEN IN THE SHADOWS OF NIGHT

FROM DUST WE ARE.

TO DUST WE SHALL RETURN

CHEERS

APPLAUSE

THE SHOW IS OVER

TO BELOVED GRANDMA

ALEXANDRA VAN MEIR

IT IS HARD LOSING SOMEONE YOU LOVE
WONDERING WHERE SHE IS
IS THERE REALLY A HEAVEN ABOVE
OR A HELL BELOW
WAITING FOR A SIGN

A SIGN TO KNOW SHE IS NOT SUFFERING ANYMORE
FEELING AS IF THIS SIGN WILL NEVER COME
A STRUGGLE NONETHELESS

TRYING TO MOVE ON TO LET GO

TO NOT FEEL THE PAIN

PEOPLE SAY IT GETS BETTER WITH TIME

BUT IT NEVER FULLY HEALS
HAVING FUTURE PLANS

THAT CAN NOW NEVER BE FULFILLED

PRAYING THAT SHE IS NO LONGER IN PAIN

THAT THE SICKNESS WAS NOT HER ENDING PHASE
HOPING SHE IS FREE OF DISEASE

FREE OF HEARTACHE

FREE OF PAIN

BUT HOPING THAT THE PAIN OF LOSING HER WILL GO AWAY

MEMORIES OF SICKNESS

MEMORIES OF DETERIORATION

MEMORIES OF THE LOSS OF HER WILL

ARE NOW THE MEMORIES THAT SURROUND HER

SUPPRESSING HER LOSS

SUPPRESSING THOSE MEMORIES

KEPT THE PAIN AWAY

NOW THE PAIN IS WAITING AT THE DOORSTEP

IT IS TIME TO TRULY OPEN UP THE DOOR

FIGHTING THROUGH IT

SO THIS TIME THE PAIN WILL FINALLY STAY AWAY

AND HER MEMORY WILL BE FREE FROM

THE DARKNESS IN MY HEART



THE CLOCKWORK KING

MAX WILLIAMS

WITH COBWEBBED THOUGHTS AND IRON TONGUE
HE CLAIMS HIS QUICKSAND THRONE
A THOUSAND SCREECHING LARKS AFLOAT
UNHEARD BY EARS OF STONE
HIS HEAD AFFIXED WITH SILVER SUNS
TO SERVE AS MEANS OF SIGHT
BUT ALL THAT LIES BEYOND THE GLOW
IS BLOCKED BY BLINDING LIGHT

RHEUMATIC RUSTED FINGER JOINTS

SEALED TAUT BY DORMANCY

HIS WARPED AND MELTED HANDS OF STEEL

FUSED TO A LOCKLESS KEY

IF ONLY HE HAD TURNED HIS GEARS

WITH REMNANTS OF PRIDE LEFT

BUT DRIFTING GUSTS OF PETRICHOR

DEPOSED HIM WITH A BREATH



THOMAS EDGE

Words that flow from mouth to mind

Born in fire or born of time

Enrich the souls encountered there

Inspire truth, dispel despair

BROKEN

FRANCIS BADGER

BROKEN, LOST, AND CONFUSED IS HOW | FEEL AT THE MOMENT. FASTER THAN THE SPEED OF LIGHT, HAD MY PRIDE, MY HOPE, AND MY CONFIDENCE SNATCHED FROM MY FIRM GRIP. AND YET THE WORLD CONTINUES TO SPIN WHILE I AM LEFT HERE IN THIS MOMENT BROKEN, LOST, AND CONFUSED BUT WHAT I AM FEELING IS ONLY FOR THE MOMENT TOMORROW I WILL NOT BE BROKEN, LOST, AND CON-FUSED BECAUSE HAVING MY PRIDE, MY HOPE, MY CONFIDENCE SNATCHED AWAY IS NOT THE END IT IS JUST MERELY A STEPPING STONE TO REACH THE TOP. SO IN THIS MOMENT I FEEL BROKEN, LOST, AND CON-FUSED BUT TOMORROW I WILL NOT BE.



QUINTON D. HOWARD

HE CRIES AT NIGHT, BUT THE TEARS DO NOT REACH HIS EYES.

HE HAS TOO MUCH PRIDE TO DISPLAY THE PAIN INSIDE.

HE LOVES DOING FOR OTHERS,

HE LOVES SEEING THEM SMILE.

BUT THEN THERE IS HIS MOTHER, WHO CAN SOMETIMES CAUSE A

HE WORKS HARD BUT MISFORTUNE STRIKES AGAIN, YET HE IS HOPING IT WILL ALL BE WORTH IT IN THE END.

HE EVENTUALLY MET A WOMAN AND SHE IS MORE LOVING THAN MOST.

HE IS WONDERFUL TO HIS FRIENDS, BUT HE IS NOT ONE TO BOAST.

HIS LOVE FOR HER IS UNMATCHED,

TO ONLY HIS BROTHER AND SISTER IS HE THIS ATTACHED.

HE BELIEVES THAT LAUGHTER IS THE BEST WAY TO HEAL,

TO NOT ONE PERSON ON EARTH, WOULD HE NOT APPEAL.

A FREE NATION

THOMAS EDGE

I'M FREE TO WRITE, I'M FREE TO SPEAK, BUT AM I TRULY FREE
LIVING IN THIS WORLD WHERE THESE ONCE GREAT LIBERTIES SUFFOCATE UNDER
THE GIRTH OF OUR FREE SOCIETY

FREE MONEY TO THE POOR

FREE HEALTH CARE FOR THE WEAK

FREE PHONES FOR THE COMPLACENT

FREE BOOZE FOR THE SLEEK

WHAT DOES FREEDOM EVEN MEAN TO THE LAMBS AND LEADERS OF OUR TIME
FOR FREE HAS TWO MEANINGS WHEN WRITTEN DOWN IN INK
DO THEY TRULY BELIEVE IN THAT FREEDOM

TO ACT

To Do

TO SEE

FOR WHICH OUR FOREFATHER FOUGHT AND DIED TIRELESSLY.

SO THAT WE COULD BE OUR OWN MASTER AND PLOT OUR OWN COURSE

BE IT TO RUIN OR WEALTH OUR CHOICES WERE THEIR MOST CHERISHED FORCE

BUT NOW IT'S ALL BEEN TWISTED ROUND OUR NECKS AND ROUND THE COURTS

WE ARE THE NATION OF FREE NOW WHERE EVERY NEED WILL BE MET

BY A GOVERNMENT SO POWERFUL IT COULD DESTROY THE WORLD GOD PERMIT

BUT WHEN EVERYTHING IS FREE

ARE WE TRULY FREE?

OR ARE WE A BUNCH OF CATTLE

WALKING IN A WORLD WITH NO MEANING

SIMPLY BECAUSE

lt's

FREE







CELESTE

FRANCIS BADGER

TODAY IS THE DAY I HAVE BEEN DREADING FOR TEN YEARS NOW. SHE HAS FOUND ME AND THERE'S NO ESCAPING. I COULD RUN, WHICH IS WHAT I DO BEST, BUT WHAT ABOUT NITIN? CAN'T LEAVE HIM ALONE WITH THE MOST MALEVOLENT PERSON | HAVE EVER KNOWN, THAT WOULD BE CRUEL AND POSSIBLY PAINFUL FOR HIM. PLUS HE DOESN'T KNOW THE WHOLE TRUTH ABOUT MY PAST. YOU SEE | TOLD HIM | LEFT HOME DUE TO MY OVERLY PROTECTIVE MOTHER, THAT I NEEDED TO BREAK FREE AND FIND MYSELF; WHICH IS PARTIALLY TRUE. I'M ACTUALLY FROM A LAND, DEEPHAVEN, THAT IS FILLED WITH ALL THINGS MAGICAL. THERE ARE WITCHES AND WIZARDS, FAIRIES WITH PIXIE DUST, KINGS AND QUEENS, MERMAIDS AND PIRATES, GIANTS AND BLACK DOGS AND ANY OTHER MYTHICAL BEING OR CREATURE YOU CAN THINK OF, MY HOME WAS BEAUTIFUL. THE FORESTS WERE FILLED WITH IMMACULATE AMBER TREES AND LEAVES AS GREEN AS AN EMERALD. YOU COULD FEEL THE WARMTH OF EACH SUN RAY HITTING YOUR SKIN MAKING THE ROSY COMPLEXION COME TO LIFE. DEEPHAVEN WAS A BEAUTIFULLY CALM PLACE, UNTIL MY MOTHER DESTROYED IT ALL. MY MOTHER CAME FROM A VERY POOR FAMILY, WHICH CREATED A DISGUSTING THIRST IN HER TO BE POWERFUL AND OWN ANY AND EVERYTHING SHE COME ACROSS. SHE SUCKED ALL OF THE LIFE AND JOY OUT OF DEEPHAVEN, LITERALLY, AND BECAME THE DARKEST RULER DEEPHAVEN HAD EVER SEEN. THERE ARE NO MORE GOOD WITCHES AND WIZARDS; EVERYTHING IN DEEPHAVEN IS DARK AND POISONED BY HER CORRUPT WAYS. | WOULDN'T ALLOW MY MOTHER TO FORCE DARK MAGIC INTO MY LIFE AS SHE DID EVERYONE ELSE. I COULDN'T WATCH AS SHE STOLE, KILLED, AND MANIPULATED INNOCENT PEOPLE FOR ALL THE DARK MAGIC IN THE WORLD. SO | RAN AWAY TO THE WORLD WITHNO MAGIC AND BLENDED IN WITH ALL THE ORDINARY PEOPLE THAT INHABIT IT; MADE YOUR WORLD MY NEW HOME. GOT A NORMAL JOB, FOUND FRIENDS, AND FELL IN LOVE. I WAS FINALLY CONTENT WITH MY LIFE; IT'S FILLED WITH GOOD PEOPLE AND ABSOLUTELY NO MAGIC, THAT IS UNTIL TODAY.

"TODAY IS THE DAY!"

"OH JOY," I SAID WITH A MONOTONE VOICE

"Come on Celeste, it's not that bad. You haven't seen your mother in years. This will be a good time for all of us. Is your father coming too?"

If your definition of a good time is levitating objects being thrown around and blown up by fireballs or negative energy forces, which would make me turn into a glowing-eyed, white-haired angry witch girl, then yes this will be a blast in a glass.

"LET'S HOPE SO."

"Don't be a Debbie downer. Tonight will be great. Do you have the grocery list?"

"IT'S ON THE COUNTER, BY THE MICROWAVE."

"OK, I'LL BE BACK IN A FEW. DON'T WORRY, LOVE, IT'S GOING TO BE FINE."

NITIN IS AT WORK IN THE KITCHEN PREPARING THE MOST DELICIOUS MEAL POSSIBLE TO IMPRESS MY MOTHER. AS FOR MYSELF, I'M STANDING IN FRONT OF THE MIRROR DREADING THE EVENTS THAT COULD HAPPEN TONIGHT. ALL I CAN SEE IS MY MOTHER DESTROYING MY LIFE, SUCKING THE HAPPINESS OUT OF IT, MAKING IT AS LIFELESS AND DRAB AS SHE IS.

DING-DONG; IT'S HER, I CAN FEEL THE MAGIC BREWING OUTSIDE MY DOOR. I WAS FROZEN, UNABLE TO MUSTER UP THE COURAGE TO TURN THE KNOB TO LET MY PARENTS IN.

"ARE YOU GONNA OPEN THE DOOR OR MAKE HER WAIT OUT THERE ALL NIGHT?"

NITIN WHISPERED IN MY EAR.

"CAN I DO THAT?"

"CELESTE, I ALREADY TOLD YOU IT WILL BE FINE. COME ON, WE'LL OPEN THE DOOR TOGETHER."

WITH HIS HAND GENTLY PRESSED AGAINST MINE I TOOK ONE LAST DEEP BREATH AS WE OPENED THE DOOR. THERE ON THE OTHER STOOD MY PARENTS. MY MOTHER'S FACE SMOOTH AND BRONZED WITH HER LONG SILKY BLACK HAIR FRAMING HER FACE PERFECTLY MAKING HER IRRESISTIBLE IN ANY MAN'S EYES.

"IS THAT MY CELESTE?"

"HELLO MOTHER."

SHE TRIES TO EMBRACE ME WITH A WARM, HEARTFELT HUG, BUT ALL I FEEL IS HER ICY, HEARTLESS BODY PRESSED AGAINST MINE. WHY MUST SHE ALWAYS PRETEND THERE IS LOVE BETWEEN US?

"Hey, I'm Nitin." It's a pleasure to meet you. Please come in."

My mother enters our house. I feel a bit uneasy but I try to act as normal as possible for Nitin.

"Well, the house smells absolutely marvelous. What has the help prepared for us?"

"THE HELP?" NITIN SAYS WITH CONFUSION. "WE HAVE NO HELP. I COOKED DINNER FOR US TONIGHT. I WANTED TO MAKE SOMETHING SPECIAL."

"Well aren't you wonderful? Nitin, could you fetch me a glass of water?"

"OF COURSE."

NITIN HASTILY LEAVES THE ROOM TO GET MY MOTHER A DRINK.

"He's so average, beneath you, dirty, and boring."

"IT'S NICE TO KNOW YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED A BIT MOTHER."

"WELL, MY DEAR, WHAT DID YOU EXPECT? AN OLD, WRINKLED, LIGHT MAGIC

WOMAN TO KNOCK ON YOUR DOOR? MY HEART IS FAR TOO BLACK AND MY PRIDE FAR TOO STRONG FOR EITHER OF THOSE TO HAPPEN."

"HERE'S YOUR WATER."

NITIN ENTERS THE ROOM WITH OUR BEST CHINA GLASS FILLED TO THE BRIM WITH PURIFIED WATER AND A FRESHLY CUT LEMON SLICE.

"UGH YOU POOR BOY, DID YOU REALLY THINK I WOULD DRINK FROM THAT?"
WITH A FLICK OF HER WRIST SHE TURNS HIM INTO STONE.

"MOTHER!"

"Now, now, Celeste. No need to get infuriated. I'm only here for one reason. If you do as I say you can have your peasant boy back and I will be gone."

"OF COURSE YOU ALWAYS COME WITH A PRICE."

"INDEED, YOU SEE THE THINGS I NEED ARE A BIT SCARCE IN DEEPHAVEN."

"WHATEVER YOU NEED I WON'T GIVE IT TO YOU."

"Oh, but you will or else Nitin here will crumble to pieces and that, my dear, is not a good thing."

I CAN HEAR THE STONE THAT IS NITIN BEGIN TO CRACK WITH EVERY WORD SHE SPEAKS.

"WHAT DO YOU WANT?"

"IN ORDER FOR ME TO BECOME THE DARK ONE I NEED TO CRUSH THE HEART, OR SHALL I SAY HEARTS, OF THE THINGS I LOVE MOST. YOUR FATHER WILLINGLY GAVE ME HIS HEART, BUT YOU, I KNEW I WOULD HAVE TO FORCE YOU."

"PLEASE, MOTHER, DON'T MAKE ME DO THIS. I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU."

"HURT ME? PLEASE, CHILD, DON'T BE SILLY. THE ONLY ONES GETTING HURT HERE ARE YOU AND PEASANT BOY."

MOTHER CALMLY WAVED HER HAND OVER NITIN'S STONE BODY. AS HE CAME TO LIFE, SHE GRASPED THE AIR WITH A TIGHT GRIP, AS IF SHE WERE HOLDING HIM BY THE NECK. NITIN BEGAN TO RISE OFF THE GROUND, STRUGGLING TO FIND HIS BREATH. HE LOOKED TO ME, HIS EYES FULL OF FEAR. I DON'T WANT HIM TO SEE WHAT I AM REALLY BUT I CAN'T LET HER DO THIS. I KNOW WHAT I HAVE TO DO. I LOWER MY HEAD AND START TO CLEAR MY MIND. I CAN FEEL THE HOUSE AS IT TREMBLES BENEATH ME. AS THE POWER GROWS WITHIN ME I SLOWLY RAISE MY HEAD AND OPEN MY NOW GLOWING, WHITE EYES.

"Well, Celeste, my beloved, haven't you grown into a powerful witch?"

"YOU WILL NOT TAKE MY HAPPINESS, MOTHER."

"BUT I WILL AND YOU WILL PAY THE COST."

WITH BOTH HANDS MOVING IN A CIRCULAR MOTION MY MOTHER CREATES A HUGE FLAMING FIREBALL, READY TO CAST.

"If the Evil Queen is what you want, Celeste, she will gladly grace you with her dark presence."

WITHOUT HESITATION MY MOTHER HURLED THE FIREBALL TOWARDS ME. THE BALL WENT THROUGH MY STOMACH CAUSING ME TO FALL TO THE GROUND.

"COME ON, CELESTE. IS THAT ALL YOU HAVE? GLOWING HAIR AND EYES? I KNOW YOU CAN DO BETTER."

I LOOK OVER MY SHOULDER AND NITIN IS NOW PINNED AGAINST THE WALL, UNABLE TO MOVE. ALL THE COLOR FROM HIS FACE HAS BEEN WASHED AWAY. MY MOTHER CREEPING TOWARDS ME, WITH EVERY STEP SHE FLICKS HER FINGERS TOWARDS THE FLOOR, MAKING MY BODY THUMP HARDER AND HARDER AGAINST THE TILE. MY EYES FIXED ON NITIN, I SOFTLY WHISPER TO HIM, "I'M SORRY YOU HAVE TO SEE THIS."

POINT MY HANDS DIRECTLY AT MY MOTHER AS A RADIANT LIGHT SPILLS FROM MY PALMS.

"I'M SORRY MOTHER BUT THIS IS FOR THE BEST."

HER EYES WIDE WITH FEAR SHE LETS OUT A BOISTEROUS CRY AS I EXERT THE LAST OF THE POWER RISING IN ME. WITH A LOUD CRACKLE MY MOTHER'S DARK, ICY BODY DISSIPATES INTO THE AIR. GASPING FOR AIR, NITIN FALLS TO THE GROUND, I STAND LIMPLY IN FRONT OF THE MURKY PILE OF DUST WHERE MY MOTHER ONCE STOOD.

"WHAT JUST HAPPENED? HOW DID YOU DO THAT?"

I DIDN'T WANT TO EXPLAIN TO HIM WHAT HAD HAPPENED. I DIDN'T WANT TO TELL HIM ABOUT MY PAST. I WANTED TO MOVE ON, START FRESH AS A NON-MAGICAL PERSON. I WANTED TO BE NORMAL. I SLOWLY TURN TO FACE HIM.

"CELESTE, YOU'RE-YOU'RE-YOU'RE GLOWING."

WITH THE SNAP OF MY FINGERS NITIN SLUMPS OVER IN A DEEP SLEEP.

"Don't worry love you won't remember any of this in the morning." Today is the day I have been dreading for ten years and now it's over.





The trees started to blur around him as he ran, the leaves crunching in his wake as he escaped. The soles of his feet leaked with crimson, staining the ground he ran on as his body protested with every forced step he took, but he would not give in. The footsteps of his pursuers could be heard behind him, trying to drag him back. He would run until he had no more energy; he would not go back there. Being caught would mean having to experience the pain again, those cold needles stabbing into his skin, the substance within them burning him from the inside as they made their way through his body.

HE COULD RECALL WITH PERFECT CLARITY ALL THE TIMES HIS BODY WAS FORCED INTO THEIR EXPERIMENTS, SCREAMS FILLING THE ROOMS AS THEIR HOSTS SUFFERED THROUGH THE NEVER-ENDING PAIN BROUGHT ON BY THE INJECTIONS. WHAT HE FEARED MOST OF ALL BESIDE THE NEEDLES OR THE SCREAMS WAS WHAT HAPPENED AFTERWARDS, WHEN HE WOULD HAVE TO GO BACK TO THAT COLD CELL WITH THE OTHERS AS THEY WAITED UNTIL A NEW SCREAM FILLED THE SILENCE. WATCHING AS THAT PERSON SCREAMING EARS, MOUTH AND EYES FLOWED WITH BLOOD, AND THE NEXT THING THEY KNOW, THE PERSON WOULD FALL DEAD AT THEIR FEET. THE WORST PART WAS HAVING TO LOOK AT THE BODY, SEEING THEIR BLOOD POOL BENEATH THEM, THEIR VACANT EYES STARING AT THEM FOR RELIEF, AND WAITING FOR THE MEN IN THE WHITE COATS TO COME AND COLLECT THE BODY. EVERY DAY WAS LIKE THAT; FORCED TO UNDERGO BEING SHOT WITH A BURNING LIQUID AND THEN HAVING TO WATCH THEIR FRIENDS DIE RIGHT NEXT TO THEM. THEY NEVER PRAYED FOR SALVATION, FOR THEY KNEW THAT IT WOULD NOT COME, BUT THIS MORNING IT SEEMED LIKE THINGS WERE ABOUT TO CHANGE.

THE ROUTINE WAS ALWAYS LIKE THAT, UNTIL TODAY. THEY WOULD HAVE NEVER KNOWN THAT THE DOOR WAS UNLOCKED, IF IT WASN'T FOR A BODY FALLING INTO IT. AS THE DOOR WRENCHED OPEN FROM THE FORCE, THEY LOOKED WITH DISBELIEF IN THEIR EYES. THE SIGHT TO THEM WAS LIKE LOOKING AT THE GATES OF HEAVEN OPENING TOWARDS PARADISE. AS THEY LOOKED ON ONE OF THE GUYS NEXT TO HIM STOOD UP AND WALKED HESITANTLY OUT THE DOOR, MAKING SURE THAT THE COAST WAS CLEAR; THEY RAN IMMEDIATELY STARTING A CHAIN REACTION. EVERYONE WAS RUNNING TOWARDS THE DOOR TRYING TO GET OUT. HE RAN DOWN THE CORRIDORS, OTHERS RUNNING ALONGSIDE HIM TRYING TO FIND A DOOR TO LEAD THEM OUT. THEY RAN TO A DOOR AT THE END OF THE HALL; NOT EVEN CARING IF IT WAS A TRAP THEY BOLTED TO THE DOOR AND OPENED IT WIDE. LIGHT FLOWED OUT OF THE OPENING, THE MINUTE IT HIT THEM LIFE STARTED TO COME BACK INTO THEIR BODIES. ALL OF THEM SPRINTED OUTSIDE, FOCUSING ON ESCAPING. RUNNING INTO THE WOODS AHEAD, THEY HEARD SHOUTS BEHIND

THEM; THE GUARDS KNEW THEY HAD ESCAPED. THEY SEPARATED, FOR NOW IT WAS "EVERYBODY FOR THEMSELVES."

REMEMBERING THE PAIN HE HAD GONE THROUGH HE PUSHED HIS BODY ONWARDS. ALL OF A SUDDEN HE HEARD HEAVY THUDS AROUND HIM. LOOKING TOWARDS WHERE THE SOUNDS WERE COMING FROM, HE SAW THE OTHERS WHO HAD ESCAPED WITH HIM GETTING TAKEN DOWN BY THE GUARDS. FOCUSING SO MUCH ON WHAT WAS HAPPENING, HE DIDN'T HEAR THE FOOTSTEPS COMING CLOSER TO HIM. WHEN HE REALIZED THAT HE HAD STOPPED RUNNING IT WAS ALREADY TOO LATE. HE WAS TACKLED TO THE GROUND; HIS BREATH KNOCKED OUT OF HIM AS HIS BODY SLAMMED INTO THE GROUND. THE HEAVY WEIGHT OF THE GUARD MADE HIM UNABLE TO MOVE. HE WAS FORCIBLY PUT ONTO HIS BACK, BEFORE HE COULD EVEN TRY TO MOVE, STONE LIKE HANDS FORCED HIM DOWN. HIS WRISTS WERE PULLED; HANDCUFFS BEING PLACED ONTO HIM, THEIR COLDNESS SEEPING INTO HIS SKIN.

"Don't even think of moving kid." The cold harsh voice of the guard commanded him. In fear of being hit he kept his mouth shut, conserving his energy to wait for the perfect opportunity.

"This one giving you any trouble?" One of the smaller guards asked with the same harshness as the man holding him down.

"Nah, I got it, he's not going anywhere." A smirk forming as the guard replied back.

"I GOT A HAND IT TO THE DOCS, THEIR EXPERIMENT THIS TIME FINALLY CAME THROUGH."

HEARING THAT, HE FELT LIKE ALL THE BLOOD IN HIS BODY WAS STARTING TO FREEZE. THEY HAD TO BE LYING. WHAT COULD BE GAINED BY LETTING THEM GO AND HAVING TO GET THEM BACK? THE GUARD, CATCHING HIS LOOK OF DISBELIEF STARTED TO GRIN, MALICE FILLING HIS EYES.

"Oh, you don't believe me do you boy. Too bad for you but it's the truth." The guard replied and his grin started to grow as the boy stared in shock.

"The docs weren't too happy you see when all of their hard work seemed to be failing. They were starting to lose hope until one of them had this idea. They would give the test subjects an opportunity to escape; your blood pumping with adrenaline should kick-start the injections, and they were right. What you were all injected with was an enhancer; it enhances one's senses along with their physical abilities. The docs know it's working when a red tattoo like mark starts to form near one of your temples. Which most of you seem to have."

Upon knowing that all of their efforts were in vain, the scrap of hope he was able to savage broke. His mind filled with nothingness. Whatever drive he had disappeared when the truth seeped in, for how was he supposed to fight on knowing that he truly never had a chance to begin with.

"THIS ONE GOES BACK TO THE LAB RIGHT?" THE SMALLER GUARD ASKED.

"YEAH, HE HAS THE MARK ALL RIGHT." SAID THE TALLER ONE, AS HE DOUBLED CHECKED.

"DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE DOCS ARE GOING TO DO WITH THEM?"

"Not really but whatever they're going to do, the subjects won't live for long." The guard replied back, starting to reach for the boy. As he was still receding back into his mind, when the guard uttered those words and touched him he felt a jolt. Images of a small pale face, blue eyes full of light and a smile that outshined the sun filled his mind. She had seemed to personify life itself; he remembered the words she had whispered to him before her death, 'live'. That's all it took for him to wake up. Filling up with his newfound strength, he waited until the guard was close enough to his hands. When the moment came, he pushed his head back and smashed it forward into the guards face. The guard staggered back, clutching his nose as crimson fluid started to flow out. His friend too shocked to react missed the opportunity to grab the boy.

Breaking free from the guards, he started to run. He pushed his battered body onwards. Running towards where the trees started to fade, he could hear curses behind him along with the growing footsteps of the guards. He quickly looked behind him watching the perspiration forming on the guards as they made their path towards him. With his new found drive he started to quicken his pace, slowly widening the gap between him and his pursuers. He stopped running because there was no more ground to run on; what lay before him was a cliffside leading to the ocean. He looked down at the waves crashing into the boulders below, feeling as if he was standing on the edge of the world.

TURNING AROUND HE WAS FACED WITH THE TWO GUARDS, THE TALLER ONE STILL BLEEDING. SLOWLY WALKING BACKWARDS, HE SAW THE GUARDS MOVING IN TIME WITH EVERY STEP HE TOOK. LOOKING AROUND, WITH THE WIND GENTLY HITTING THEM HE MADE UP HIS MIND; HE WAS GOING TO DIE ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, BUT HE WAS GOING TO DO IT ON HIS TERMS. FINALLY RELAXING HIS WAYWARD BODY, HE STEPPED BACKWARDS AND SLOWLY STARTED TO FALL, ALLOWING GRAVITY TO DO THE REST. AS HE WATCHED HIS SURROUNDINGS SLOWLY BECOME SMALLER, HE SMILED; HE WAS FINALLY LIBERATING HIMSELF AND LIVING.



DADDY ISSUES

AND A MANICURE DISASTER

KATIE BARRETT

YOU KNOW HOW PEOPLE SAY "I'M NEVER GOING TO WASH THIS HAND AGAIN"? MMHMM. FUNERALS. I NEVER KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT AND THE NEXT THING I KNOW I'M STANDING IN LINE AS THIS VERY NICE CHURCH LADY OPENS A LARGE CIGAR BOX WITH WHAT'S LEFT OF MY FATHER INSIDE. A FINE GREY POWDER AND THERE'S A LOT OF IT. I SEE MY MOTHER GRAB A HANDFUL AND LIGHTLY TOSS IT INTO THE LEAVES IN THE MEMORIAL GARDEN. NOT TOO HIGH IN THE AIR, THAT'S THE TRICK. TOSS IT TOO HIGH AND A GENTLE BREEZE WITH LEAVE YOU WITH A MOUTHFULL OF DAD, A LEVEL OF CLOSENESS NONE OF US ARE QUITE PREPARED FOR. MY MOTHER LEAVES THE LINE AND THE CHURCH LADY LOOKS AT ME EXPECTANTLY, OUT STRETCHING THE CIGAR BOX IN MY DIRECTION.

YOU WANT ME TO....OH. I WAS NOT PREPARED FOR THIS. LOOKING DOWN AT MY RIGHT HAND AND THE BOX I TRIED SUPPRESS MY SHOCK AND UTTER TERROR WHILE NOT DELAYING THE REST OF THE PEOPLE IN LINE TO GET A HANDFUL OF DAD. I THINK I WAS CONVINCING. I FOLLOWED SUIT WITH A GENTLE TOSS INTO THE LEAVES, NOT TOO HIGH, JOINED MY MOTHER TOWARDS THE BACK OF THE LINE WHERE MY BEST FRIEND STOOD AT THE READY WITH HER POCKET HAND SANITIZER.

AND THAT'S WHEN THE ETHICAL DILEMMA STRUCK ME: DO YOU WASH DAD OFF YOUR HANDS? THERE WAS A LOT TO CONSIDER THERE.

ONE: MY NAILS WERE LONG AND I WAS INCREDIBLY UNPREPARED FOR THIS.

Two: This was all that was left of my father in the entire world.

THREE: THERE ARE SNACKS INSIDE.

FOUR: HOW BAD IS IT FOR YOUR HEALTH IF YOU EAT JUST A LITTLE BIT OF PEOPLE ASH?

As the smell of synthetically fruity flavors and alcohol pervaded the air I refrained from joining the second group clustered around my best friend's pocket hand sanitizer. I stuck my hand in my pocket and squeezed tightly, feeling every grain. So what if I had dad under my nails? While I may prefer him other places this is where he was now and far be it for me to let him go so easily.

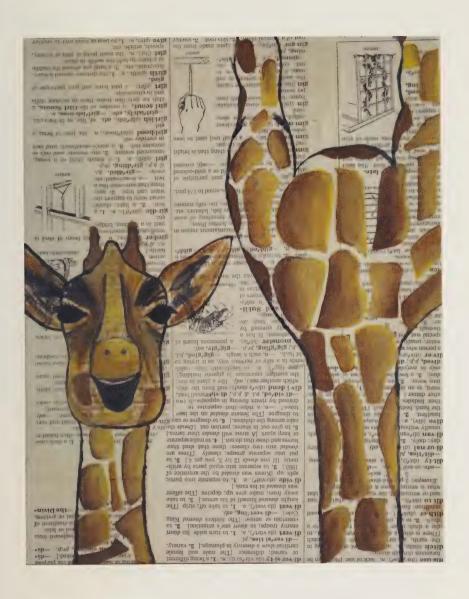














IF A STORY IS IN YOU, IT HAS TO COME OUT

-WILLIAM FAULKNER

PRISM

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THE COVER WAS PRINTED ON
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